

Bush nomination runs into Senate opposition

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The nomination of George Bush as director of the Central Intelligence Agency is in deepening trouble in the Senate, a check of sources there reveals.

A new element in the opposition is that Senate majority whip Robert C. Byrd now agrees with critic Mike Mansfield, his majority leader.

This newspaper has learned: both say they will not vote for Senate confirmation of Mr. Bush, the current U.S. envoy to China, unless Mr. Bush publicly removes himself from consideration for the vice-presidential nomination.

Hub of the opposition is concern that Mr. Bush is too closely tied to politics to run what most senators think should be a politically independent agency. Sources both pro and con cite his past service as chairman of the Republican National Committee; they are deeply concerned by the thought that he is a possible vice-presidential selection for next year.

As leader of the successful fight to block confirmation of L. Patrick Gray as FBI director, Senator Byrd — in the words of a top aide — “saw the politicization of the FBI. He doesn’t want that to happen to the CIA.”

If Mr. Bush were to remove himself unequivocally from contention for the 1976 vice-presidential post, all sources agree he would win speedy Senate confirmation. But they assume he will not do this.

They note that Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld would not during committee hearings last week, and that Messrs. Rumsfeld and

Bush are believed to have immediately followed Nelson Rockefeller as President Ford’s choice for vice-president last year.

Several sources note that the next two months could be critical to the nomination. Except for an initial outburst, thus far the Senate has not really focused on it, they say — being preoccupied by the New York City fiscal crisis and energy legislation. Once these issues die down and Congress readies for a late-December recess, the opposition to the nomination may either grow or melt away.

Some Senate sources think opposition will grow. Others, like one liberal Republican who has some reservations, believe it will virtually evaporate, ultimately leaving only a hard core of liberal Democrats finally in opposition.

Senate committee hearings on the Bush nomination are not expected until early January. They are being delayed now by the need for Mr. Bush to remain in China until completion of the President’s trip there early next month. Then the hearings will be delayed by Congress’s year-end recess.

Right now, oppositions to the nomination “covers a pretty wide spectrum” of moderate and liberal senators, says one Bush backer with concern. He notes the opposition of Senators Byrd, Mansfield, and Frank Church.

Mr. Bush — a popular former congressman from Texas — also has his supporters. One is Sen. Barry Goldwater, who strongly endorses the nomination. Another is Sen. Richard S. Schweiker, who nonetheless thinks that as a general practice Senator Church is right in holding that a politician who is a former national-party chairman ought not to head the CIA. But Senator Schweiker holds that Mr. Bush is an exception — a straight-shooter who is well suited to the post.